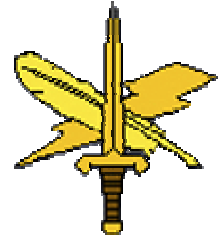




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648TH AREA SUPPORT GROUP TO RETURN TO ST. LOUIS

By Mike Heronemus
Editor

Command and control of U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard units moving through Fort Riley took on a new dimension May 1. The departure and change of command ceremony for 648th Area Support Group in front of the post headquarters that morning signified a reduction in the massive mobilization effort that has consumed the post and two National Guard organizations since the terrorist attacks Sept. 11, 2001.

The 648th ASG mobilized the much larger 6025th Garrison Support Unit for duty at Fort Riley about 3 1/2 years ago. Two years ago, about 60 648th ASG Soldiers replaced about 200 6025th GSU Soldiers to direct and control the preparation, training and movement of National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve units headed for deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and elsewhere.

During the 648th ASG's stay at Fort Riley, its personnel handled more than 200 units and 13,000 deploying and returning reserve component Soldiers, "the majority of whom deployed in harm's way," said Maj. Gen. Dennis E. Hardy, commanding general, 24th Infantry Division (Mech) and Fort Riley, at the departure ceremony.

Part of the 648th ASG Soldiers at Fort Riley will return to their homes and civilian jobs the middle of May as members of the redesignated 648th Regional Support Group. Col. Corinne E. Bardgett now commands the group, assuming command from Col. Kimberly A. Weaver right after the departure ceremony ended.

About 30 648th RSG Soldiers will remain at Fort Riley, however, volunteering to take up a smaller mission of command and control for reserve component Soldiers who will move through Fort Riley for specialized training and a follow-up mission with the new military transition teams that post cadre will prepare for advisory and assistance roles to Iraqi and other nations' security forces, said Lt. Col. Richard D. Ariail, 648th RSG S1.

The 648th RSG Soldiers staying at Fort Riley will be assigned to the U.S. Army Garrison and perform duties similar to what they have been doing, only on a smaller scale, Ariail said.

The “small ceremony was “an absolutely crucial recognition of great Americans ... and great citizen-Soldiers,” Hardy told the audience of well-wishers.

“This nation of ours, five years into the war on terrorism, in fact, could not have begun to accomplish what it has accomplished so far had it not been for the great teamwork, the great spirit of our citizen-Soldiers,” he emphasized.

The two National Guard support units had to assume the tasks of Fort Riley’s deployed active duty units and personnel in order to accomplish the mobilization mission, Hardy explained. “In 2004, most of this installation was deployed,” he reminded.

“Up and down and across the installation, we had reserve component Soldiers performing active duty missions for the active duty portion of this formation because we couldn’t do it for ourselves, because of deployments and because of the additional workload that had come in,” Hardy said.

Weaver highlighted a few accomplishments by the 648th ASG while it served at Fort Riley. “Over \$7.2 million in supplies and equipment were requisitioned or purchased for mobilizing units. Over 1.8 million rounds of ammunition were expended (training Soldiers), and Detachment 2, our medical holdover detachment, processed over 1,622 Soldiers,” she said.